

Blurbs for *Uncomfortably Numb*, by Meredith O'Brien

Meredith O'Brien writes deftly and gracefully about the shock of becoming an unreliable narrator as she navigates both disbelieving doctors and the challenges of her own changing brain in the process of searching for answers to the concerning symptoms she experiences. A journalist by training and a writer by nature, she fearlessly investigates, contemplates, and confronts her diagnosis of multiple sclerosis as she learns to adapt to her body's new way of being in the world. Her frank look at what this process is like for both herself and her family will be heartening to anyone who has lived with the uncertainty of chronic illness.

— ***New York Times* bestselling writer Andrea J. Buchanan, author of *The Beginning of Everything***

In *Uncomfortably Numb*, Meredith O'Brien writes unflinchingly about her life before and after her MS diagnosis. Detailing her treatment, her struggles to be taken seriously by doctors, and the effects of it all on her family, career and sense of self, she writes in a clear-eyed and courageous voice, bringing the reader along with her as she navigates this profound, life-altering experience.

— **Sarai Walker, author of bestseller *Dietland***

Uncomfortably Numb tells a sadly all-too-common story: of a woman whose symptoms were initially dismissed by doctors before a life-changing diagnosis. Frank and relatable, it will speak to anyone who knows the uncertainty that chronic illness brings and the resiliency it demands.

— **Maya Dusenbery, author of *Doing Harm: The Truth About How Bad Medicine and Lazy Science Leave Women Dismissed, Misdiagnosed, and Sick* and writer/editor of the award-winning site Feministing.com**

Meredith O'Brien's *Uncomfortably Numb* is a rare window into everyday life with multiple sclerosis, and how chronic illness can turn one's very identity inside out. The illness is unpredictable: an initial diagnosis takes years to materialize, symptoms may or may not signal the progression of the disease, and treatments are imperfect. With candor, O'Brien bares her most vulnerable moments as she learns the new rules of working, parenting, and living in the present when the future is uncertain.

— **Jessica Fechter, author of the bestselling memoir *Stir: My Broken Brain and the Meals That Brought Me Home***

A modern telling of the newly diagnosed story from a no-nonsense journalist, a gifted writer, a pragmatic New Englander. While uniquely her own -- by definition -- there will be few who have or know chronic illness who will not glimpse well-told aspects of their own experience in this memoir. *Uncomfortably Numb* is heart-breaking, it's harrowing, and it's heroic. What is is not is candy-coated. Refreshingly honest, unguarded, and reflective about what is, arguably the most difficult half decade in Meredith O'Brien's colorful life.

— **Trevis Gleason, author of *Chef Interrupted: Discovering Life's Second Course in Ireland with Multiple Sclerosis***

Uncomfortably Numb pulls readers into the reality of an unexpected and life-altering diagnosis of multiple sclerosis, with forthright clarity, detail, heart, and insight. O'Brien's memoir is not only a gift to adults dealing with MS, but also for people grappling with any other sudden onset diseases and similarly "invisible" conditions—and for the people who love them.

This story offers the full view of how MS invades a life, from fear, loss, and complications, to adjustments and small victories. The author's story of the first few years of disease progression — overlapping with raising teenagers, continuing a career, grief and midlife losses — takes readers through challenges, triumphs, and disappointments of all sizes, on the road to acceptance.

At turns unsettled and dispirited, O'Brien is also an appealing narrator you'll root for as she advocates for herself (and by extension, for other women whose undiagnosed symptoms are often dismissed). Along the way, she comes to understand her disease and herself more thoroughly as she creates her new reality. An engaging, thought-provoking, informative story, and a narrator you'll want to know and follow.

— **Lisa Romeo, author of the memoir *Starting With Goodbye***

Uncomfortably Numb is a journalist's investigation to uncover the mysterious illness that plagues her, combined with a mother's touch to understand how it will impact her family, her career, and the rest of her life. A triumphant story of determination and resiliency.

— **Marisa Bardach Ramel, co-author of *The Goodbye Diaries: A Mother-Daughter Memoir***

A memoir penned with such truth you won't know if you should keep reading or pause to shed a tear. Meredith O'Brien showcases the individual effects of the debilitating reality for those facing multiple sclerosis. Not only does the author tackle the painful veracity of the disease, but provides reminders of how critical the healthcare system is to those in need. The truth of MS is

as difficult to overcome as the disease is to diagnosis by health care professionals who sideline symptoms mimicked by other diagnoses.

— **Savannah Hendricks, author of *Grounded in January***

Uncomfortably Numb is a moving story that is both achingly familiar to someone living with multiple sclerosis and yet unequivocally Meredith O'Brien's personal tale of a life changed by a devastating diagnosis. Weaving in the added tragedy of personal loss, O'Brien writes with the measured curiosity of a journalist and yet with a raw vulnerability, giving an honest, unflinching look at navigating life with chronic illness. With courage and tenacity, O'Brien details the frustrations of not being believed by health care providers; dealing with unpredictable, life-altering MS symptoms; and the struggle to hold on to her previous identity, both in her career and her family. Rich with compelling story-telling, *Uncomfortably Numb* is a triumph that will take readers on an emotional journey and leave them with hope.

— **Elissa Grossell Dickey, author of *The Speed of Light*, blogger for National MS Society**

A riveting memoir . . . O'Brien's honesty, humility and humor will have you flying through the pages, rooting for her every step of the way.

— **Joan Dempsey, author of *This Is How It Begins***

A candid, in-depth look at one woman's journey with MS and how it touches those around her. A great read for anyone struggling with chronic illness from diagnosis, through acceptance and into thriving in the new normal.

— **Lori Espino, president of Greater New England chapter of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society**

Meredith O'Brien's courageous memoir chronicles her struggles leading up to her MS diagnosis, including one doctor telling her that she should simply "de-stress," then her battle with the symptoms. O'Brien's tenacity shines through on every page. While managing the MS she continues to work, takes care of her . . . parents, and raise her children. The author refuses to give in to the many challenges that life throws her way. An inspiring read.

— **Diane Cook, author of the memoir *So Many Angels: A Family Crisis and the Community That Got Us Through It***

Meredith O'Brien's fourth book, *Uncomfortably Numb*, may be her most important. It is an intimate, generous memoir of living with MS that will guide newly-diagnosed patients and their loved ones through difficult challenges.

Poignant and thoroughly readable, *Uncomfortably Numb* is a deeply personal look at how the diagnosis of a debilitating illness such as MS profoundly affects patients and their families. It is also the story of a strong woman who is learning to adapt and is determined to persevere.

— **Cathy Chester, speaker, writer of MS blog An Empowered Spirit**

Meredith writes clearly and honestly about the painful stages of shock, recognition, and acceptance that you go through when you learn you have a chronic illness. Throughout, she never loses sight of what's really important in life – her family and her own identity as a writer.

— **Rose Pike, executive vice president of editorial at Remedy Health Media**

Meredith O'Brien's journey is beautifully expressed in reality that only someone with MS understands -- a must read for anyone with multiple sclerosis or connected to MS. O'Brien effectively shares what a life with MS can be like. Often, the words could come from my own experience with MS over these past twenty years. The challenges and fears and frustrations she shares with unrestrained honesty. At times, I am brought back to my own diagnosis and initial illness. I was back in the MRI, experiencing the nightmares of some doctors and finding relief in the love and nurture that can be occasionally found.

O'Brien nails it with her ability to connect. To life. To MS. To her own honesty. The normal and not so normal.

Reading O'Brien is like stepping into my own skin fifteen, twenty years ago: The meltdowns, the stress, the unknowns. Anxiety arises reminding me of those times, the utter fear of my body letting me down, of it failing. The fear it brought and the beauty it finally produces. We are diamonds in the rough finding our brilliance through turbulence then love.

... [O'Brien] doesn't tell what MS - she shows us with her words, her stories. The self care she takes proves beneficial -- writing notes, keeping journals, reliable resources. They all add up. She takes command of her disease and the information/research available to her.

This is a book to be read now. It touches on all aspects of living with MS and what we as patients need to know.

— **Caroline Craven, award-winning blogger, writer and certified life coach at GirlwithMS.com.**

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